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REF: MOSCOW 1143

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: PM Fico reassured EU ambassadors March 16 that Slovakia would support the consensus EU position on Kosovo, including in the UNSC. Nonetheless, political parties continue discussions on a parliamentary resolution expressing objections to the Ahtisaari plan and Kosovo independence, although all now agree that such a resolution would be "non-binding." The MFA is now just as worried about the message from Moscow as the message from Slovak politicians. Russian interlocutors told the Slovak PolDir that they do not want the UNSC to take up the issue as presented by Ahtisaari. Kosovo will likely be on the agenda of the March 30-31 GYMNICHE, prompted by the March 28 Contact Group meeting. End summary.

Fico Tells EU Ambassadors Slovakia Will Support EU Position

¶2. (SBU) At a March 16 lunch with EU Ambassadors, Prime Minister Robert Fico (Smer) firmly stated that Slovakia would stay with its EU partners, support the EU position, and not be isolated on Kosovo. He said he expected a fierce debate in parliament on the issue, and he was not certain how it would end. However, FM Kubis takes instructions from the government office, not from the parliament. When asked how Slovakia would vote on a UNSCR, Fico replied that Slovakia would expressly support Ahtisaari, consistent with the EU position. Fico also said that he did not expect to have any serious discussion on Kosovo when he visits Moscow, since Slovakia was clearly adhering to the EU position. Fico reconfirmed that Speaker of Parliament Pavol Paska (Smer) was preparing his own draft resolution on Kosovo, which would meet the needs of the GOS. Fico complained vociferously about opposition leader and former PM Mikulas Dzurinda (SDKU) for being irresponsible in taking a political position on Kosovo final status without considering the foreign policy consequences.

How Many "Single" Resolutions Are There?

¶3. (C) Political parties continue work on a parliamentary resolution on Kosovo. The Foreign Affairs Committee's members agreed in principle March 14 to co-draft a resolution to which all could agree, but this now seems unlikely. The Slovak National Party caucus leader Rafael Rafaj told poloffs March 19 that SNS was sticking to its original, non-binding draft. He said that although SNS MP Jozef Rydlo had suggested a common draft, Dzurinda jumped on the suggestion only because "he is a more clever politician." Rafaj rejected the SDKU version because it is full of the word "must." Rafaj said that parliament cannot instruct the

government in foreign policy. SDKU interlocutors have told us that they have removed "binding" language from their draft. Paska confirmed to the Ambassador and other diplomats that he is working on a draft resolution, though we have not yet seen it. He said he prefers to avoid a parliamentary debate on the issue, although it may be procedurally impossible. Vice-Chairs of Meciar's HZDS party Milan Urbani and Zdenka Kramplova told the Ambassador March 19 that Rydlo had sought their support. They also said that Christian Democrat MP Jan Carnogursky was also lobbying for his own draft resolution. (Comment: Carnogursky is a poisonous actor on Kosovo: he published an op-ed in Russian media urging Moscow to veto any UNSCR based on the Ahtisaari plan.) They gave the impression that HZDS would vote for something, but they did not know exactly what. They reiterated support for Minister Kubis and recognized the need not to bind the government's hands. Smer MP Moimir Mamokja told us March 19 that he did not know how the members of his club would be instructed to vote; he had only seen the "innocuous" SNS resolution.

¶4. (SBU) Rafaj said there is a joint drafting session scheduled for March 20, though he did not expect the parties to be able to agree. The foreign affairs committee will then discuss the draft(s) on March 22. The soonest the issue will be discussed in plenary is March 27.

Lajcak on the Russians on Kosovo

¶5. (C) MFA PolDir Miroslav Lajcak told the Ambassador March 19 that his Russian interlocutors on Kosovo (Lajcak was in Moscow March 15-16) signaled a firm line in working to prevent the Ahtisaari plan from being considered by the UNSC anytime soon. Lajcak knows that the Russians may be practicing brinkmanship and he did not want to sound unduly

pessimistic, but he found the GOR dug in on forcing further negotiations between Serbs and Kosovars and confident in their resistance to the rest of the Contact Group.

¶6. (C) Dep. Foreign Minister Titov and Kosovo envoy Botsan-Kharchenko told Lajcak that while the Vienna discussions provided a good basis for negotiation, the Ahtisaari plan needs amendment, and Ahtisaari is not the person to conduct further talks between the parties. A new envoy should be named. Implementation of non-status aspects of the plan could go forward; discussion of status issues could not. Titov and Botsan-Kharchenko claimed that there was no daylight between Tadic and Kostunica, and that Russia could accept only what the Serbs accept in the key areas of border, no UN membership, and no Kosovo army. When Lajcak spoke of Russia's responsibilities in the UNSC, the Russians said they understood these, but they would not accept blame for promises others made to the Kosovars. (Comment: Lajcak believes that Moscow and Belgrade are now coordinating very closely on strategy and tactics.)

¶7. (C) The Russians said they would press to keep the Kosovo issue off the G-8 Summit agenda, if it came to that. As Titov told Amb. Burns (reftel), they stressed to Lajcak that Russia did not seek any tradeoffs with other conflict areas. The Russians tried to buttress their position that movement to the UNSC was premature by citing a lack of consensus even among the other five members of the Contact Group. They cited a Russian MFA statement following the visit of an Italian MFA official that Russian and Italian views were "identical" in several aspects and clearly more cautious than those of the U.S. and others. The Russians see space for communication between Moscow and the EU. And while the Chinese would not take the lead in New York, the Russians claimed Beijing would follow Moscow's lead.

¶8. (C) Lajcak will see Ahtisaari in Vienna March 21 and his German counterpart in Berlin March 23. Given the hard Russian line he received in Moscow, Lajcak said he saw no real need or value in reporting the results of his visit to the rest of the EU, as he has in the past. Although the EU was not eager for a discussion of Kosovo, he said, he assumed

the March 30-31 Gymnich would take up the subject, prompted by the March 28 Contact Group meeting.

VALLEE